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ABSTRACT

Substitute teachers are responsible for over 1 full year of every child's education, but research shows that only 10 percent of school districts provide more than 2 hours of substitute teacher training, and 53 percent of school districts provide no training. There is a tremendous need to implement effective training programs that will ultimately improve factors leading to student achievement. Due to inadequate training, students are not being effectively educated by most of their substitute teachers. The Substitute Teacher Institute at Utah State University has developed training materials based on sound educational content and research. The program focuses on six areas created to improve the learning environment for students. Within these six areas, this paper addresses some of the issues hindering substitute teachers from effective teaching. One essential key to managing a class successfully is learning how to handle situations without becoming emotionally involved. Also, it is critical that substitute teachers know what activities and materials can be brought into the classroom to supplement the lesson plan when needed. With the skills gained from adequate training, substitute teachers will enhance the learning environment of every classroom they enter. (Contains 11 references.) (SM)

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Enhance ONE year of education.

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Substitute teachers are responsible for over ONE FULL YEAR of every child's K-12 education!. A recent national survey, conducted by the Substitute Teaching Institute at Utah State University, indicates that only 10% of school districts provide more than 2 hours of substitute teacher training. Additionally, this survey shows that 53% of districts provide NO TRAINING (Dorward & Jones, 1999; and Longhurst, & Sorenson, 1999). Therefore is tremendous need to implement effective training programs that will ultimately improve factors leading to student achievement. Following an effective skill training substitutes are more likely to accept assignments, and provide better instruction in those assignments (Jones 1999).

With under half of school districts actually sponsoring an orientation/training program for their substitute teachers, and 11% actually evaluating them, drastic improvements must be made in substitute skill training implementation (Purvis & Garvey, 1993 and Potter, 1995). Training must be instigated in the majority of the districts nationally. Replacement nurses would never be sent into a hospital without training, yet we continually send untrained instructors into our children's classrooms. It is apparent that improvements are needed in the realm of training for substitute teachers. However, many districts will respond with comments like, "We can't even get enough substitutes to cover empty classes, let alone take more time to train them." Interestingly, though, training has been shown to be a key component to the increase in sub pool numbers (Minthorn, 1999). Geoffrey G. Smith, executive director of the Substitute Teaching Institute at Utah State University (STI/USU), states that "No other small investment in education today will make a more significant improvement in the classroom than training substitute teachers" (Smith, 1999).

If you were to ask students walking home from school what they did during the day, 10% would respond with "Oh, Nothing, we had a sub" (Staffing Industry, 1999). Students are presently not being effectively educated by a majority of substitute teachers, due to inadequate training. Permanent teachers frequently come to school ill because they have little trust in what will happen during a school day when a substitute is employed. Administrators are more concerned with what problems arise when substitutes are in a classroom than the quality of instruction that occurs. Educators exhibit this attitude with comments like: "It's just one wasted day," or "Let me know if Henry acts up." Without question, substitute teacher training is an often overlooked concern within school systems, however, it is one issue that, if improved, can have tremendous impact on NE FULL YEAR of <u>every</u> student's education.

New ideas are always on the horizon in education. Although these new programs provide viable assistance in educating students, it is also imperative to perfect our current components. Substitute teachers are currently in 274,000 of our nation's classrooms each day based on a 10% absenteeism rate (National Center for Education Statistics, 1999 & Staffing Industry, 1999). Because of this, skill training of substitutes will powerfully

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impact student learning. With sound classroom management skills, basic knowledge of legal and first aid issues, implementation ability with specific teaching strategies, and a resource kit containing lesson plans, fill-in activities, and other essential resources, substitute teachers have the foundation to maintain a productive classroom environment. Permanent teachers will gain confidence that substitute teachers have the ability to instruct; administrators and staff will respect them as educators; and students will begin to say, "Our substitute was great. He/she taught me how to..."

Since improved training opportunities are needed, what does effective substitute teacher skill training look like? Allocated time, curriculum content, follow up, and the involved individuals are essential items to address when creating, overhauling, or simply augmenting a substitute training process. As districts begin to implement training sessions for substitute teachers, it is imperative that the material being used has been proven to be effective.

The STI/USU has developed training material based on sound educational content and research gained as a result of a Department of Education grant called STEP-IN (Substitute Teacher Educational Programs Initiative). Based on this research, the following content components have been shown to be vital in a substitute teacher training program.

- Being Prepared and Professional
- Classroom Management Skills
- Legal and First Aid Issues
- Teaching and Instructional Strategies.
- The Use of Fill-In Activities
- Creation of a SubPack or Resource Kit

These six components of training effectively prepare substitute teachers to enter a classroom. STI/USU recommends that, at a minimum, training should be conducted in a three to four-day session. The actual time spent in instructor directed training should be a two-day, or twelve-hour, workshop with an additional two days allocated for observation, shadowing, or mentoring. As all educators know, actual class time is essential to understanding how to instruct appropriately. STI/USU recommends in-service opportunities throughout the school year in order to increase the professional ability of substitute teachers.

Being Prepared and Professional

Many substitute teachers are limited in knowledge regarding school atmosphere and environment. Having not been in a classroom since they were in school as a student creates a disadvantage for many substitute teachers. Due to this, it is necessary for substitute teacher instruction to detail ways an educator should dress, act, and prepare for a school day. Dressing professionally, and arriving early to the assignment are just two items that should be discussed. Being a professional substitute teacher is an all-day job which can be organized for training into the following five categories:

- At Home
- Prior to Entering the Classroom
- In the Classroom Before School
- Throughout the Day
- At the End of the Day

Principals, teachers, and students have high expectations for instructors entering their classrooms. It is critical to provide training for substitute teachers so they can meet or exceed the expectations of the educational community.

Classroom Management Skills

The number one skill requested by substitute teachers is the ability to effectively manage a classroom. (Smith, Murdock, Jones, Goldenhersh, & Latham, 1999) One essential key to managing a class successfully is learning how to handle situations without becoming emotionally involved. The first part of instruction should provide information about basic principles of why students behave the way they do and practical steps to implement that encourage desired behaviors. In addition to basic principles of behavior there are 5 management skills that can eliminate 94% of student behavior concerns.

Teach Expectations

The first skill that substitute teachers should learn is how to teach expectations. Before students can be expected to behave appropriately, instructors must explain the specific behavior expected. Substitute teachers must learn how to clearly and specifically state their expectations.

Get and Keep Students On-Task

Substitute teachers must know and understand that "On-Task" means that students are actively engaged in appropriate learning activities. Beginning instruction with a student self-guided activity or a teacher directed whole class instruction immediately following the bell will start the day with task-oriented behavior.

Positive Teacher to Pupil Interaction

On average, teachers allow about 98% of all appropriate behaviors to go unrecognized and are more likely to recognize inappropriate behavior than they are to recognize appropriate behavior. (Smith, Murdock, Jones, Goldenhersh, & Latham, 1999) Every educator can learn ways to increase the amount of positive interactions.

Respond Noncoercively

There are some student behaviors which are inappropriate and must be addressed. Substitute teachers need to know ways to instructively deal with these types of behavior. There are six steps an educator can follow to stop and re-direct inappropriate behavior.

1. Say something positive.
2. Briefly describe the problem behavior.
3. Describe the desired behavior.
4. Give a reason why the new behavior is more desirable.
5. Practice the desired behavior.
6. Provide positive feedback.

Avoid Being Trapped

The use of a trap-related management technique is evidence of a frantic, desperate, even drastic attempt to maintain control of the classroom environment. All educators should understand the seven trap-related control methods, and implement proactive strategies that will maintain productive learning.

Gaining skill in a variety of effective classroom management techniques will allow substitute teachers to implement the most effective strategy for any given situation. Once classroom management concerns are addressed focus can be placed on the student achievement and instructional continuity.

Legal and First Aid Issues

Substitute teachers are held to the same legal liability as permanent teachers and should therefore have knowledge of policies and legal requirements of working within school systems. Policies that should be part of all teacher training include first aid issues, emergency/accident procedures, and field trip requirements. Legal aspects such as: release and supervision of children; due care and caution; and confidentiality are also imparative to include in substitute training. With specific content instruction substitute teacher concerns can be dramatically decreased with regard to legal and safety reports.

Teaching and Instruction Strategies

Knowledge of several teaching strategies enable a substitute teacher to equip themselves with the ability to instruct students at a variety of levels. The use of a KWL strategy is common among many educators. With this one teaching technique substitute teachers can implement an introduction, review, or extension of learning in any classroom. Other common teaching strategies include: brainstorming; concept mapping; higher level thinking; and how to present audiovisual materials. Each additional technique a substitute teacher learns provides them with another tool to adapt instructional delivery to the situation and learner.

The Use of Fill-In Activities

What should substitute teachers do when lesson plans are sketchy, incomplete, fail to fill the class period, or are completely missing? With appropriate fill-in activities substitutes can provide meaningful instruction and supplement the permanent teacher's lesson plan when necessary. Having a few activity ideas in mind will enable the substitute teacher to keep the teaching and learning moving throughout the day. There are three basic types of activities that students can engage in that will assist in maintaining positive learning.

- 5 Minute Fillers
- Early Finishers
- Short Activities

Substitute teachers need to receive instruction on ways to implement activities in each of these three categories.

Creation of a SubPack or Resource Kit

Substitute teachers need to know activities and materials that can be brought into the classroom that will supplement the lesson plans of the permanent teacher at a moment's notice. Being prepared for substitute teaching begins with having an activity bag of ideas and lessons that can be implemented when a learning activity ends early or lesson plans are sketchy. (Dubois, Gangel, Young, Heiss, Webb, & Paprocki, 1991) Not knowing the content or possibly the grade level can be detrimental to preparation for substitute teachers. Substitute teachers, therefore, need to be taught specific types of activities and materials that can be used across many grade levels and content areas. Creation of a SubPack, or resource kit is a must for every substitute teacher. There are four basic categories for a resource kit, which include:

Everyday Items
Everyday components of a SubPack are things such as scissors, glue sticks, crayons, calculator, and material for nametags. These items enable substitute teachers to have needed supplies at a moment's notice versus rifling through every drawer and cupboard in the classroom.
Rewards
Many times students will behave better or work more diligently if there is an external motivation. Certificates, tickets, stickers, or privilege cards are effective rewards that entice students to remain on-task and learning.
Activity Materials
A guessing jar is a good example of an activity that a substitute teacher can bring into any grade level and implement as an extension activity. Picture books, tangrams, brainteasers or a number of other lesson activities are great resources that encourage involvement and learning.
Personal/Professional Items
These are parts of a SubPack that help substitute teachers take care of their needs during the day. A snack, water bottle, change for lunch, a clipboard, and a change of shoes can help keep a substitute's personal needs satisfied, and allow for adaptation during the day, which ultimately improves instruction.

Initial training can include a variety of instructors. Administrators, master teachers, principals, and master substitute teachers are the recommended trainers. An administrator or principal should provide legal issues and policy guidelines. A principal is also helpful in providing insight to the expectations when substitutes arrive at a school. Master teachers are excellent instructors with regard to teaching strategies, classroom management, and fill-in activities. Veteran substitute teachers provide realistic examples and explanations that participants can identify with and relate to.

In addition to training substitute teachers many districts have improved their substitute teacher programs with training designed for the district and site administration. William R. Drury suggests 8 ways to make a more effective substitute teacher program. He indicates that greeting substitutes at a special meeting prior to school starting improves the professionalism that is given to and expected from substitute teachers. (Drury, 1988)

All the players in the educational system must become more aware, and appreciative of the vital role substitute teachers play in teaching students.

Does skill training for substitute teachers improve factors leading to student achievement such as on-task-behavior, interest level, and continuity of instruction? The answer to this question is a resounding YES! Training substitute teachers improves the ability of substitutes to enhance the learning environment of every classroom they enter. Prior to training many substitute teachers find themselves "winging it". After training substitutes teachers possess specific skills that can be implemented to improve every classroom situation. Students need educators that have skills that aid instruction. Through implementation of a proven substitute teacher skill training school districts across the nation can effectively meet this need.

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